

I am writing to express my strong disapproval of any relaxation or elimination of the public interest limits on media ownership.

The administration you serve ostentatiously associates itself with the exaltation of the free market as the solution to all of our problems. For over a century now, Americans have recognized that monopoly control destroys the free functioning of markets, and oligopolies do so only to an insignificantly lesser degree.

In the free market of ideas required for a genuinely functioning democracy, which is supposed to be the content of regulated public media, what we have now is just such an oligopoly of a few corporations with more economic power than most nations. The deregulation rules you are now considering would serve to complete and perfect the negation of the freedom of this market.

In contrast to the impairment of the free functioning of markets in material commodities, where oligopoly only causes fewer choices and higher prices for consumers, the strangulation of the free market of ideas gives us 'consumers' of political communication, i.e. citizens, the exact opposite of what we want - and what we'd be able to choose with adequate information.

Majorities of Americans count ourselves 'environmentalist', while we find ourselves being governed by the most anti-environmental administration in history, willing to sell our health and well being for any amount, however small - in fact selling it for the principle of defying our concerns. Most of us support reproductive rights, while this government attacks them at every opportunity.

We want fiscal responsibility - and get a regime that is deliberately bankrupting government to execute an anti-government ideology flatly opposed to most Americans' expectation that government serve as our tool for solving national problems, rather than as a tool for transferring wealth to the ruling class from everybody else.

Americans don't want to be subjects of an empire, yet this regime lies to us with impunity in order to conduct illegal wars of imperial aggression. How is it possible that ~40% of Americans still believe that WMDs were found in Iraq other than by the news media they rely on deliberately misleading them?

Where the 'freedom of the press belongs to the man who owns the press', the concept of a free market of ideas is that media owners are kept honest by competition from other media owners representing a diversity of interests, ideologies and values. What we have now is a handful of corporations, all sharing and promoting the same interest - to use their concentrated wealth, mainly derived from non-news and even non-media related business - to buy out large enough shares of the media market to make themselves immune from competition.

The only way they can continue pursuing that goal is to achieve the elimination of regulations designed to prevent just that goal. That requires ensuring the seizure and maintenance of power by ideologues who will appoint regulators hostile to the purpose of regulation.

To do that, our mega-corporate owned 'mainstream' media have abandoned their watchdog role over political corruption and incompetence. They provide 'news' that is an appalling insult to the intelligence. The range of ideological expression on, for example, most talk radio, now ranges from right wing to extreme right wing. They substitute commercialism, sensationalism, and chauvinistic propaganda for meaningful political discourse, using selectivity, framing, and spin to show us everything through the distorted lens of their corporate interests. They have succeeded in shifting the broadcast of most political content from public service content generation to paid advertising, where the rich, including themselves, always have the advantage.

The result is a government transformed into a tool of the interests of the largest corporations, a form of government most accurately described as fascism. Benito Mussolini, the inventor of 'fascism', said that 'corporatism' is a more accurate label for his ideology. No matter what you call it, it is a complete inversion of the ends and the means of democracy.

Any public policy seeking to protect diversity in the media must recognize the simple fact that ownership matters. Media consolidation has already led to declines in local and minority ownership as well as the homogenization of content in radio and television. Permitting cross-ownership of newspapers and broadcast stations, or allowing further concentration in local television markets, will only worsen the problems we already have.

When the FCC attempted to weaken and remove media ownership limits in 2003, I was among the millions of Americans who rose up in protest. Congress and the courts ultimately intervened to turn back that misguided regulatory process.

Now that these same rules are being reconsidered, the FCC must stand firm with the public against further concentration of media ownership in the hands of the few. A vote against media consolidation is a vote for democracy. If you do not resist every repeated attempt to complete the media control portion of the totalitarian agenda, you shall be allowing the fascists to drive the final nail in the coffin of democracy.